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STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF STATE SHULTZ

At 1400 hours Greenwich Mean time yesterday (10:00 EDT) a Korean Airlines Boeing 747 on route from New York to Seoul, Korea departed Anchorage, Alaska. Two hundred sixty-nine passengers and crew were on board, including Congressman Lawrence P. MacDonald. At approximately 1600 hours GMT the aircraft came to the attention of Soviet radar. It was tracked constantly by the Soviets from that time. The aircraft strayed into Soviet air space over the Kamchatka Peninsula over the Sea of Okhotsk, and over Sakhalin Island. The Soviets tracked the commercial airliner for some two and one-half hours. The Soviet pilot reported visual contact with the aircraft at 1812 hours. The Soviet plane was, we know, in constant contact with its ground control. At 1821 hours the Korea aircraft was reported by the Soviet pilot at 10,000 meters. At 1826 hours the Soviet pilot reported that he fired a missile and the target was destroyed. At 1830 hours the Korea aircraft was reported by radar at 5,000 meters. At 1838 hours the Korean plane disappeared from radar screens. We know that at least eight Soviet fighters reacted at one time or another to the airliner. The pilot who shot the aircraft down reported after the attack that he had in fact fired a missile, that he had

destroyed the target, and that he was breaking away. About an hour later Soviet controllers ordered a number of their search aircraft to conduct search and rescue activities in the vicinity of the last position of the Korea airliner reflected by Soviet tracking. One of these aircraft reported finding kerosene on the surface of the sea in that area. During Wednesday night, U.S. State Department officials were in contact with Soviet officials seeking information concerning the airliner's fate. The Soviets offered no information. As soon as U.S. sources had confirmed the shooting down of the aircraft, the United States, on its behalf and on behalf of the Republic of Korea, called on the Charge d'Affaires in Washington this morning to express our grave concern over the shooting down of an unarmed civilian plane carrying passengers of a number of nationalities. We also urgently demanded an explanation from the Soviet Union. The United States reacts with revulsion to this attack. Loss of life appears to be heavy. We can see no excuses whatsoever for this appalling act.